

NYTimes
On Assassination

To the Editor:

I am shocked to discover that the moral climate of our Government has deteriorated to the level where it was deemed necessary for Attorney General Levi to declare that "no President may order assassination" (news article June 9). Our New England fields rumbled yesterday as John and Sam Adams, John Hancock, Paul Revere, Joseph Warren, William Prescott, Ethan Allen and a host of others turned over in their hallowed graves upon learning that they had created a nation in which such a self-evident moral law had to be proclaimed two centuries later.

WILLIAM H. WENNEMAN
Turo, Mass., June 9, 1975

To the Editor:

Recent headlines about alleged C.I.A. assassination plots against foreign leaders have obscured more important issues involving the U.S. secret-intelligence system.

Assassination conspiracies involving agencies of the American Government are sordid, despicable matters to be deplored without reservation and investigated thoroughly. But other issues deserve greater attention and higher priority, such as the assassination of America's reputation in the world resulting from ill-conceived "intelligence" missions; the assassination of entire governments (e.g. Guatemala, Iran and Chile) or the assassination of the Constitution by excessive secrecy and the use of intelligence agencies for explicitly prohibited purposes.

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"Assassinations" of this kind tend to be overshadowed by headlines focusing on possible C.I.A. murder attempts against foreign leaders. Editors, reporters and particularly Congressional investigators should not have their energies, and the public's attention, diverted to issues of lower priority, even if murder plots against foreign leaders have the superficially higher news value. Democracy's assassination is the top news story of this generation.

HARRY HOWE RANSOM
Washington, June 13, 1975

The writer is author of "The Intelligence Establishment."

To the Editor:

If the Rockefeller Commission had been the judges in the case of *State v. Bluebeard*, its decision might have read as follows:

"The defendant is charged with, and confesses, murdering one wife after another. These acts, while illegal and subject to criticism, should be viewed in proper perspective. The defendant must be judged on his whole record, not a few excessive responses to external pressures.

"Our review of Bluebeard's life shows that the great majority of his actions fully complied with the law. There is no evidence that he ever robbed, raped, cheated or lied. A court of justice cannot condemn a man whose conduct has otherwise been so exemplary. The defendant is admonished to go and kill no more wives. Case dismissed."

PHILIP ELMAN
Washington, June 12, 1975

The writer is a lawyer and a former member of the F.T.C.